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STUDENT-DESIGNED PAVILION ON BATTELL BEACH GREENLIT FOR NEXT PHASE

COURTESY PHOTO / WEST CURRIER

Artistic rendition of the proposed project on Battell Beach. The project is partly sponsored by Middlebury's Center for Health and Wellness.

By MET LY
News Editor

On Monday, April 27, the project to construct a pavilion on Battell Beach received the go-ahead from administrators to enter the next phase of design development and construction documentation. It marks a milestone in the development of Battell Park.

The pavilion was designed by students Benji Sindell '26, West Currier '26.5 and Henry Heilman '26 with the support of Makerspace Manager Daniel Houghton '06 over the course of this spring semester.

"This winter, I was presented with an awesome opportunity in the form of a question: 'Hey, would you and some students consider designing a pavilion for Battell Beach?'" Houghton said in an interview with The Campus.

The interested group was Middlebury's Center for Health and Wellness (CHW), which received a donated endowment of $4.9 million, designated by former President Laurie Patton for student mental health. On top of current developments at Battell Park, interest generated from the endowment has allowed the CHW to host wellness days with guest facilitators, hire an additional counselor and expand financial support for its internship program.

"We hosted several sessions for students to come in and give input on what they'd like to see,"

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Hillel renames to The Jewish Association at Middlebury following attempted disaffiliation from Hillel International

By YUVRAJ SHAH
Managing Editor

After a year-long consultative process, the student organization previously known as Hillel has changed its name to 'The Jewish Association at Middlebury (JAM)', while maintaining an on-paper affiliation with Hillel International, an umbrella network of Jewish campus groups across the United States.

Since 1954, Hillel, now JAM, has provided religious and social programming for Jewish students at Middlebury. They provide Shabbat and Havdalah services each week, celebrate major Jewish holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashanah, and host fun events for the community.

In an email sent to JAM membership last week, the organization board noted: "While Middlebury College will continue to be affiliated with Hillel International, we believe this name better reflects our local community. This decision was made to reflect the desires of our diverse student body, and it doesn't endorse any one political persuasion."

According to co-presidents Caroline Jaffe '26 and Anya Rose '28, conversations about disassociating with Hillel International were sparked after a fundraiser held on Nov. 10 2023, in which JAM raised $656 by selling Challah bread. Proceeds from the fundraiser went to World Central Kitchen, an organization that provides food relief in both Palestine and Israel.

"We had a fundraiser for World Central Kitchen, which was operating in Gaza and in Israel, and we got a stern email from Hillel International, saying, 'Why are you guys raising money for Gaza?' I think that was the first time I remember [thinking], oh wow, this really isn't aligned with my Jewish values at all, to be like, 'Why are you guys feeding these starving people?'" Jaffe noted in an interview with The Campus.

As a result of the email, JAM changed its Instagram caption about the event to "All proceeds will go to World Central Kitchen's team in Israel and Gaza," adding 'Israel' at Hillel International's request.

Hillel International asks all its affiliate chapters to maintain an unwavering commitment and support for Israel, discouraging

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PROVOST MICHELLE MCCAULEY REFLECTS ON THREE DECADES AT MIDDLEBURY

COURTESY PHOTOS/ MICHELLE MCCAULEY

Michelle McCauley will be stepping down as Provost on June 30

By MANDY BERGHELA & YUVRAJ SHAH
Editor-in-Chief & Managing Editor

President Ian Baucom announced on Jan. 22 that Executive Vice President and Provost Michelle McCauley will step down from her position on June 30, concluding a tenure spanning three decades of teaching and institutional leadership at Middlebury.

McCauley will take a sabbatical beginning July 1. Her next steps, she said, will either be a leadership role at another institution or a return to teaching and research.

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Page One Literacy community book swap exchanges over 1000 books

COURTESY PHOTO / JUDE KUYKENDALL

Page One Literacy Book Swap on Proctor Terrace drew students and community members alike.

By RACHELLE TALBERT
News Editor

On April 24, over 1000 books changed hands at a community book swap hosted by student organization Page One Literacy. Open to both students and community members, many brought a book to share. Others brought tote bags filled with them. Situated on Proctor Terrace, the event included a craft table, where children were encouraged to make bookmarks, and volunteers on the Proctor lawn were reading to passing children.

According to Jude Kuykendall '28, co-president of Page One Literacy, the event serves as a way to bridge the gap between the student body and the Middlebury community.

"The book swap started as a way to connect with students, and then also people around town and children from the schools were going to, and have those two communities come together," Kuykendall said in an interview with The Campus.

"I think it just arises out of a love of books and a love of reading and wanting to share that with the community," Co-President of Page One Katrina Schwarz '26 said. "Page One is a great conduit for that because that's the club's mission already, to foster this love of literacy and reading in local elementary schoolers. If we can kind of push the boundaries on how we can do that within the community, it's great, and the bookswap is a way to do that."

This year, the event drew dozens of students and over 35 community members, young and old alike.

"It was the most successful book swap we had yet, at least in my opinion," Schwarz said.

Starting in the spring of 2025, the first Community Book Swap

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STUDENT-DESIGNED PAVILION ON BATTELL BEACH GREENLIGHTED FOR NEXT PHASE

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Director of Counseling Tammy Austin said in an interview. "What students kept coming back to was 'space to be.'"

"One of the resounding things we heard from students is that community mental health, to them, was not about more counselors or more clinical services. It was about spaces to gather — organically and in planned ways — and to be outside," Barbara McCall, associate vice president for student health and well-being, added.

In its current design concept — still subject to change — the pavilion features a sheltered space with seating, a fireplace, and a sunrise-facing deck that could serve as a performance space.

Project leaders used words such as "gathering," "playful," "refuge" and "prospect" to describe themes that went into designing the pavilion.

"It's just somewhere I'd want to be," Heilman said. "I just think it'd be a nice hangout spot."

The design was informed by student opinions gathered from a survey that yielded over 100 responses, posted on different campus bulletin boards.

Additionally, "The Beacon," a student-built installation, was exhibited at the campus arts festival Nocturne, where visitors could provide feedback on pavilion designs in person or via a separate QR code.

Generally, student responses favored a space for hangouts and studying, a fireplace and a performance space in a post-and-beam style structure.

Student involvement will follow the process through its actual construction.

"Students are going to construct this," Houghton said. "I think it will be a thousand times more meaningful to see it built with the work of students rather than mysterious professionals that helicopter in and get the job done."

Incorporating hands-on building into a liberal arts education is central to the philosophy of the Makerspace.

"I think the mindset here at Middlebury has traditionally been that building and doing things ... is not an intellectual endeavor," Sindell said. "The Makerspace is an attempt to really emphasize what learning is with your hands."

"There's something extremely satisfying about having an idea and bringing it to life in the real world," Currier added.

Designers also hope to pay tribute to Old Battell, which is set to be replaced by a new museum, by repurposing elements of the building in the pavilion's design, such as its slate roof and marble.

The project is part of a broader development on Battell Beach, building off of an independent study by architecture student Mica Bodkins '26, which drafted a plan for Battell Park. The next phase of the plan, featuring permanent hammocks and a "serpentine" table, is set to be completed soon and will add to the existing swing set and lounge chairs installed in the park's first phase.

As the warm weather sets in, the park has already seen much traffic from students.

"We literally saw students coming down off the hill, getting on the swing, doing a few swings, and then going upon their day," Austin remarked. "[It's] super fun to kind of see the park live in action being utilized but also know that it doesn't take organizing an event. It doesn't take kind of the structure of 'I have to set aside a full hour.' That literally can be as you're passing through."

The CHW is also exploring the possibility of incorporating pocket playgrounds like Battell Park around campus, albeit on a smaller scale, according to McCall.

"What if one of those serpentine tables showed up, or there was just a cluster of three hammocks outside Stew," McCall said. "All of a sudden there are really varying size and shaped places where people could gather year-round."

Student designers expressed appreciation for the support they had received from the administration regarding the project being greenlit and taken to the next stage.

"I think it's kind of special as a student to be taken seriously by [administration] at the end of the term," Heilman said. "I certainly had my fears deep down that the response would be, like, 'this is ridiculous'... But it was the complete opposite of that."

"I think [the greenlight] is a reflection of the work that we put into it. I think we were taken seriously, but also we took this endeavor seriously," Sindell added. "We made our project legitimate through that work and that effort."

"It's been satisfying seeing how much the administration responds to student interest to act on something I think, though it might not always seem that way, if you are a Middlebury student who wants something to happen and is willing to work for it, there are people here who will support you with that vision," Currier remarked. "It's just about going out there, getting your hands dirty and giving it a shot."

The project is now moving into the design development and construction planning phase before entering an 18-month permitting process covering fire safety, Act 250, and groundwater approvals.

"I'm looking forward to when new students arrive and [Battell Park] is just part of Middlebury," McCall said. "It's exciting to talk about the actual implementation phase ... but soon it'll just be like it's always been there."

MIGRANT JUSTICE'S MAY DAY TEACH-IN ENCOURAGES LABOR RIGHTS ON CAMPUS

By KAI ARROWOOD
News Editor

KAI ARROWOOD / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Student groups such as Sunday Night Environmental Group, Middlebury's ACLU chapter, or Firewall, Students for Justice in Palestine, and Migrant Justice were present at the teach in.

On May 1, the student organization Migrant Justice held a May Day Teach-In in the Grille, hosting a variety of student groups and faculty, staff and student speakers to discuss labor rights on campus and beyond. As various speakers took the stage, four student activist organisations simultaneously tabled in the back, offering resources and ways to get involved with their work.

May Day, also known as International Workers' Day, commemorates martyred labor movement activists from the 1886 Haymarket Affair in Chicago. Although the holiday originated in the U.S., it is largely celebrated internationally, while the majority of Americans celebrate Labor Day instead, which falls on the first Monday of September.

With rising concerns surrounding the rights of migrant workers, fair treatment of staff and faculty and the stifling of labor mobilization nationwide, the teach-in addressed a wide range of labor issues. Representatives from Migrant Justice kicked off the teach-in by emphasizing the importance of solidarity with workers on campus who feel their labor is invisible.

"Students comply with the culture in which labor is completely hidden from us and seen as separate," a Migrant Justice representative said. "We are made to forget that our learning environment is also a faculty and staff working environment."

Associate Professor of Sociology Jamie McCallum followed, describing the long and complicated history of May Day and labor movements in the U.S., highlighting the early protests that led to the establishment of the eight-hour workday. As an academic, McCallum's work centers labor and work issues across the world, and he went on to encourage students to get involved with the labor movement in any way they could.

"Solidarity is a verb. We don't have to think of something as being in solidarity or an act of solidarity. Solidarity is like practice. You learn how to do it, and it takes time and energy," McCallum said.

Continuing to elaborate on the theme of solidarity in labor movements, Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Cynthia Gao highlighted the "bread and roses" slogan, touted by female textile workers in the early 20th century as a way to push for labor improvements beyond simple wage or hours reforms.

"The slogan bread and roses reminds us that struggle itself produces new joys, new forms of beauty, through the building of bonds based on solidarity and collectivity, rather than competition," Gao said.

She closed her speech by reciting the 1912 poem in its entirety, before student workers were invited to give their accounts of the working environment on campus. Of the three accounts, two were anonymous and read aloud by other students. Across all three accounts, students cited the invisibility they felt working in myriad positions, but especially in the dining halls, where their peers would ignore them if they saw them in uniform.

"This campus doesn't work on its own, and the people who make it work shouldn't feel invisible," one student said.

Student workers encouraged their peers to acknowledge their labor by simply saying hello, treating staff, students or not, with respect.

"This small talk might be uncomfortable, but it's a mutual recognition of dignity and personhood, which is worth every second," another student wrote.

Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies Patricia Saldarriaga, who signed off on a 2020 open letter to the college regarding the issue of wage compression, elaborated on the origins of hatred, often felt by the "other," or immigrants in the U.S.

"What we need to confront is not just prejudice, but the systems that teach us what to fear and who to fear," Saldarriaga said. "If hate circulates, then it can be interrupted, and that interruption is a political responsibility."

Associate Professor of Film and Media Culture David Miranda Hardy, who currently serves as president of the Middlebury chapter of the American Association of University Professors, then took the stage. Hardy was closely involved with last spring's faculty and staff-led walkout, which protested Middlebury's recent budget cuts. He described his experience growing up as a refugee from political unrest in Chile, and his subsequent involvement in protests upon his return, and applauded Middlebury students for putting together the teach-in.

"If we are to recover democracy in a way that is even better than before, in a way that is more responsive to the needs of the people, it's going to be through your work, through young people," Hardy said. "I'm so excited to see young people working collaboratively, collectively, to make a better world."

Representatives from various student organizations then stood together onstage and detailed their commitment to one another, despite the differences in their own specific missions. Sunday Night Environmental Group, Middlebury's ACLU chapter, or Firewall, Students for Justice in Palestine, and Migrant Justice were all present.

"Although the content of our meetings differ, we are all united by a fight for justice and a need for coalitions. Our missions each connected a struggle for workers' rights, because none of us are free until all of us are free," Firewall member Sanza Parzybok '28.5 said.

Each student organization outlined their goals for the labour movement and overall activism on campus, including expanding the Milk with Dignity campaign, which advocates for more equitable conditions for dairy workers; the boycott of the artificial intelligence platform ChatGPT; and highlighting the struggles of Palestinian laborers. They concluded by encouraging attendees to stop by the tables in the back if they wanted to get involved.

The teach-in concluded with a few more student speakers, one of whom highlighted the recent unionization of employees at the nearby Porter Medical Center, who successfully attained a 20% wage increase as a result of their organization. The final two speakers encouraged Middlebury students to separate themselves from the "extractive relationship" the college can have with the world.

"We must align ourselves against the exploitation of the workers of Addison County, and against the imperial village that we benefit from in the heartland of the United States," Renée Butler-Jancose '26 said.

As Middlebury continues to grapple with staffing, budget cuts, and the escalation of immigration pushback, the presence of labor activism on campus may see significant changes over the next few years. Teach-in organizers encouraged students to join in with their work, emphasizing its value in the increasingly volatile labor rights landscape.

Page One Literacy community book swap exchanges over 1000 books

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only had two folding tables and fewer books. They collaborated with Otter Creek Bookstore to source the majority of their books. Last week, Page One had eight tables filled with books and five different community organizations who donated.

"Otter Creek Used Books donated things, New England Review donated a very large amount, a few hundred books. Vermont Bookshop had a lot of advanced readers' copies and damaged books that they donated, which was really sweet of them, and Davis Library donated some. And the rest came from students," Kuykendall said.

For the first time this year, the organization included crafts for children to do, setting out materials to decorate colorful bookmarks, along with asking volunteers to be there to read to them. Very few children came to the reading or craft sessions.

"Something that was different this time is we planned to have books and crafts available for kids that were coming by, as well as reading sessions," Schwarz said. "Was that successful? Not quite. But it was a good idea and a good start, and in the future. I think it'll be a good kick-off point."

Kuykendall put significant effort into drawing out members from the community and hopes the event will grow in future years.

"The day was a success because we had Jude put a lot of effort into marketing the event," Schwarz said. "He wanted the word out that the book swap was happening."

Knowing there was no risk of running out of books, Kuykendall used his community connections to market the event. From getting an article published in the Addison Independent to featuring the event in the Mary Hogan school newsletter for families, the Community Book Swap was widely promoted to encourage attendance.

"We're inviting people that might not have opportunities to get a book, rather than just wealthy retirees around town," Kuykendall said.

"When I frame it in advertising, it's always 'town-wide book swap,' rather than Middlebury College Book Swap, even though it is on campus," Kuykendall said. "And I think the retirees group, they don't have a divide between the college on the hill and town life, but lower-income students and various populations aren't represented that much at Middlebury. There's still a gap, so I want to bridge that as much as I can."

Though the event was primarily attended by students, many town residents hiked up to Proctor Terrace to exchange books.

"Lots of community members who came and had all these donations, and were so excited," Schwarz said. "We heard so many times, 'Thank you so much for doing this,' 'Great idea,' which meant a lot as a club who puts effort into organizing events — having positive feedback is great."

"At the end, there was a mom who came with her son riding bikes. And we had closed up a little bit early because the traffic was really winding down. It was 15 minutes before the event was supposed to end. We were packing everything up in boxes.

And she comes, and she was like, 'Oh my gosh! I thought this was for another 15 minutes. Can we swap some books?'"

The volunteers pulled out the boxes of children's books, opened them up, and did one more swap.

Editor's Note: Katrina Schwarz '26 is the Senior Local Editor at The Campus.

Hillel renames to The Jewish Association at Middlebury following attempted disaffiliation from Hillel International

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criticism of the Israeli state. It also does not allow its chapters to engage with any other student organization that supports the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a Palestinian-led strategy to pressure the state of Israel into ending its oppression of Palestinians.

"Taking out any perspective that I have on BDS, I just kept coming back to this idea of how are we ever going to get to peace in Israel and Palestine if we can't even have a Middlebury Jewish group and a Middlebury SJP [Students for Justice in Palestine] talk to each other in Vermont, pretty much as far removed as you could be," Jaffe said.

JAM does not receive any funding from Hillel International, and, unlike many other college campuses, Hillel does not employ a rabbi at Middlebury.

Jaffe and Rose, along with other JAM board members, started a consultative process to rename the organization and disaffiliate with Hillel in the summer of 2025, after the international organization's continued support for Israeli attacks on and incursions into Palestine.

"We are feeling increasingly gross about being kind of the front face of an organization that is affiliated with a parent organization that has these values that we don't agree with," Jaffe added.

After meeting with the college's Rabbi and Associate Chaplain, Daneille Stillman, the JAM board hosted in-person and online listening sessions, allowing JAM members to voice their opinions on a potential name change and also provided students with a Google form to share their thoughts anonymously.

"I was absolutely blown away by how supportive people were for disaffiliating, even people, even students that I knew to be more pro-Israel than I was, were supportive of the idea," Jaffe said.

"This was primarily a student initiative, but the Scott Center and other administrators were involved in supporting the students and helping them think through the different perspectives of various stakeholders in the community who might be impacted by a name change," Stillman said in an email to The Campus.

At the request of Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life Mark Orten, JAM invited Associate Vice President for Student Engagement and Belonging Brian Lind to host these listening forums.

Jaffe and Rose noted that these sessions were important for the board to decide how to vote. Generally, board members voted to disassociate, not solely based on their personal belief, but on the overall desire of JAM membership.

However, in Nov. 2025, one week before the board planned to vote, JAM received an email from Lind and Smita Ruzicka, Vice President for Student Affairs, informing them that they did not have the authority to rename the organization and disassociate with Hillel International.

"The communication felt contradictory. We'd been communicating with them and keeping them in the loop, and really clear that the goal of all these listening sessions was to have a vote on it," Rose said.

"We felt like it was disrespectful to ask people to be really honest and transparent with us about their relationship with Judaism on campus, and then … kind of leave them in the dark, wondering what was happening," Jaffe added.

However, the board still voted, resulting in a 7-to-1 recommendation to disassociate.

"Let us be clear: this decision is not a rebuke of Zionism, Zionist students, or the importance of Israel to many in the Jewish community. Rather, it reflects a desire to create the most welcoming and pluralistic space possible," a Dec. 2025 email to JAM membership read.

YUVRAJ SHAH / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Jewish Association at Middlebury (JAM), formerly Hillel, hosts many religious and social activities at the Jewish Center at the Freeman International Center.

One of the concerns raised by the college administration regarding disassociation and a name change was an alleged contract between JAM and Hillel International. Jaffe and Rose noted that despite inquiries to Middlebury administrators, General Counsel Hannah Ross, staff at the Scott Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, Hillel International representatives, and a search of their own JAM archives, no such contract has since been found.

The college suggested that Jewish students interested in disassociation with Hillel International — the vast majority — form their own organization, a suggestion JAM firmly rejected.

"There are just not enough Jewish students to have all these different groups, and then from a spiritual sense, it's really important to me that we weren't siloing people off as much as possible. And the fact that [the college suggested] separating people according to their views on Israel and Palestine is antithetical to what we're trying to do in creating a more pluralistic space," Jaffe said.

At the request of the college, JAM organized a virtual meeting between their leadership and a representative of Hillel International.

"This, I think, for me, was what really sealed the deal. It was, first of all, really hard to get in contact with them despite our rabbi [Danielle Stillman] really trying to help us out and us taking steps to reach out," Rose noted.

The organization told JAM board members that they must universally adopt Hillel International's political views and values about Israel.

"When we asked them pretty directly [about these values], they also said something along the lines of that their expectations are different from the ones that are posted online. When we asked them to clarify, she said she would rather not," Rose said.

The Hillel International representative who attended this meeting refused to share any contact information with JAM.

Nevertheless, while JAM could not formally disassociate from Hillel International, board members proceeded with a name change to better reflect the values of its membership.

"We said we want to disaffiliate, and they said you can't. And we said, well, we're going to change the name anyway. And they said, we can't stop you," Jaffe said.

Renamed to JAM, Jaffe and Rose hope that the organization continues to maintain its Jewish-focused programming while continuing to disassociate with the guidelines of Hillel International.

"My hope for the organization would be that under this new name, people feel less of an obligation to follow or even pay attention to these guidelines that I think the vast majority of our students don't agree with," Jaffe said.

For Jewish students at Middlebury, the Scott Center provides other opportunities for support and religious guidance alongside JAM.

"Our office organizes, funds and leads High Holiday services and meals (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), the campus Passover Seder, and the Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) service … In addition, Jewish students are supported by all the offices on campus that intersect with Jewish life — from the Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew and Israeli Society programs to the Office of Student Engagement and Belonging to the Hebrew Language and Culture Club," Stillman added.

PROVOST MICHELLE MCCAULEY REFLECTS ON THREE DECADES AT MIDDLEBURY

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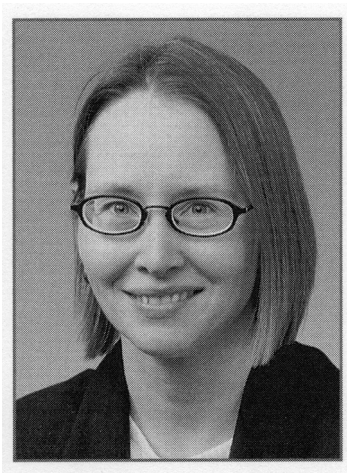


MICHELLE MCCAULEY
Psychology

Michelle McCauley began at the college in 1995 as an applied psychologist.

The college has begun the search for its next provost but has not yet shared further details.

McCauley arrived at the college in 1995 as an applied psychologist in the Psychology department, with a particular focus on applying psychological theory to societal challenges. Her early research in legal psychology focused on eyewitness memory and children's courtroom testimony, noting that children's accounts were not widely taken seriously in U.S. courts until the late 20th century.

"Much of my early work was this combination of understanding how to support individuals in telling their stories, but doing so in a way where the accuracy of what was being said would allow them to be good witnesses," McCauley said in an interview with the Campus.

She also oversaw Middlebury's Conservation Psychology Lab, which she founded to investigate the psychological underpinnings of pro-environmental behavior. The lab has worked closely with Middlebury's Sustainability Solutions Lab and has long served as a training ground for undergraduate thesis students. She also co-founded the Vermont Center for Behavioral Science Research on Climate and the Environment in 2021, extending the lab work beyond the college.

Beyond her academic work, McCauley became the first director of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation. The Collaborative launched in December 2021 with a $25 million anonymous gift, stewarded by former President Laurie Patton, and McCauley formally became director in January 2022 with an immediate mandate to build.

"The first six months, everything we needed to be — I needed to find the leaders for each of the pillars," McCauley said. "I'll kindly pay you tomorrow for a hamburger today. I was asking for work in a window where the grant had not hit our institution yet."

Much of what made the launch possible, McCauley noted, was the groundwork already laid by Professor of Political Science Sarah Stroup through the Engaged Listening Project, a program that provides faculty- and student-facing staff with dialogic practice training, funded by the Mellon Foundation. When McCauley stepped away from the Collaborative to take on the provost role, Stroup stepped in as director — a transition McCauley described as seamless.

"Honestly, [Stroup] could not have been a better person there. Just perfect for the moment in every way," McCauley said.

The collaborative has since expanded significantly, with student programming embedded into the first-year experience, travel opportunities and a growing focus on external partnerships with nonprofits and NGOs.

In July 2022, the former Provost and Edward C. Knox Professor of International Studies and Political Science, Jeff Cason, passed away unexpectedly. McCauley was asked to step in that summer as interim Executive Vice President and Provost. She was officially appointed to the role in 2024.

Her tenure as provost was first marked by the end of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. She describes this time as abrupt and a period of large transition, following the then Vice President of Academic Affairs and Faculty, Sujata Moorti's decision to go on sabbatical. McCauley assumed the position of provost alongside a new Dean of Faculty, Jim Ralph, Rehnquist Professor of American History and Culture.

"Sujata [Moorti] made a decision … around her efficacy and leadership being in the faculty and in her scholarly areas and decided not to come back … I'm very grateful to Jim [Ralph] for the support as we worked with an amazing team … just lots of transition, I guess, is the way we described this year," McCauley noted.

McCauley also added that the pandemic left a significant financial strain on the college.

"Where higher ed is coming out [of the pandemic], and folks are really tired, and they've done tremendous work, and morale is tough… COVID was expensive for this institution."

When post-pandemic enrollment surged beyond what campus housing could accommodate, McCauley spearheaded a first-year program in Copenhagen, sending a cohort of incoming students abroad to ease the pressure while the college worked to improve its overenrollment.

During her time as Provost, the college announced a $10 million annual reduction to patch a 15-year-long financial deficit. This reduction almost universally came from reducing staff and faculty benefits. Alongside Interim President Steve Snyder and Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration David Provost, McCauley was one of the public-facing administrators behind this budget cut, which saw 94% of faculty pass a motion calling for a total reversal of the planned budget cuts. Following this vote, over 300 faculty, staff, and students alike protested outside Old Chapel, presenting the motion, alongside an 800-signatory petition to McCauley.

As she reflected on her time at the college, McCauley commented on Middlebury's ability to weather different financial, political and social crises.

"I can get upset about whatever the situation might be today, and I realize that these big windowsills and windows, so many people before me, have looked out with different challenges, right? Whether we're talking about the Civil War, the pandemic of the early 1900s, I mean, these are these things [that] repeat," McCauley said.

In her 31 years at Middlebury, McCauley has seen the college change while retaining some of its old traditions. She notes that while the college has made an effort to increase access for diverse students over the past few decades, she believes it has been fostering cross-cultural dialogue since the inception of the language schools in 1915.

"There are a lot of different ways to talk about inclusion and access, but I think about being 110 years of the language schools that were really developed with this understanding. That was a piece, not the only piece, but a piece of thinking across cultural differences."

When asked about her faith in the future of Middlebury, McCauley noted that she is "all in on Middlebury's future directions."

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its use in higher education was something of a potential concern. McCauley noted that AI's prevalence in high schools may diminish the quality of students, as more and more students rely on it for academic tasks.

"This question of how AI will change what it needs to be educated? And it is clear that we must have humans who are deeply knowledgeable, and, not unlike training yourself for a marathon, you actually have to do the work to build the muscles to be able to run. You have to do that to become [an] expert in the loop … I am very worried about the junior high and high school students who are smart, because it's the smart students who, if they don't want to do the hard work, [will use AI]. I can't police that."

McCauley noted her support for the humanities and languages, particularly emphasising that languages are essential for developing cultural understanding.

"I said to a group of first-years, at the time, there was just the Willy Wonka movie was out again. And I'm like: "We've all got the, if you're here, you've got the golden ticket. You may not realize it, but it doesn't matter. You do."

ROUND ROBIN CELEBRATES 50 YEARS WITH A SPRING SIDEWALK SALE

COURTESY PHOTO / ALEXANDRE APFEL

Since its founding, Round Robin has donated 100% of its proceeds to Porter Hospital, meaning that all staff are volunteers, not working paid positions as sales representatives.

By ELISABETH DELLIT
Staff Writer

On Saturday, May 2, Round Robin, an upscale resale store located at Marble Works, celebrated its 50th anniversary. Outside, picnic tables were set up for both face and rock painting, alongside a lemonade stand. Additionally, free homemade sweets were available to community members.

Round Robin was founded in 1975 by several women who wanted to address the need for affordable clothing in Middlebury. Starting as a consignment store, it has evolved into a resale store primarily dependent on community donations. The store specializes in women's clothing, accessories, and shoes, but it also offers a men's and home goods section. On their Facebook page, customers can preview the Round Robin's quality pieces showcased that week through videos and posts. Since its founding, Round Robin has donated 100% of its proceeds to Porter Hospital, meaning that all staff are volunteers, not paid sales representatives.

"There wasn't a place to buy inexpensive children's clothing. And so these ladies, and they all had kids, and they were passing their clothes around, you know, hand-me-downs, they decided to start a shop for any low-income families," Becky Huestis, a volunteer at Round Robin explained.

Robin Huestis, Becky Huestis' daughter and a volunteer at Round Robin, was the main coordinator of the event.

"It's been a long winter, and it's nice to be able to have some fun," Huestis said.

She explained how the crafts, lemonade stand, and yard games helped bring the town together for the celebration. Several other similarly oriented organizations and local businesses were present at the celebration, such as Junebug, Toad Hall Flowers, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Junebug, also a local resale store, specializes in children's clothing, accessories for newborns to kids size 16, and maternity clothing. Toad Hall Flowers is a farmer-florist shop located in Marble Works. On Toad Hall's terrace, they displayed dozens of beautiful planters with a sign inviting people to come in and prepare for their summer gardens. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library — a global book-gifting program that provides free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth until they turn five years old and a collaborator of Addison County Readers, Inc — ran a booth stocked with children's books and a bookmark craft.

"We're here just to make ourselves known, and we're giving away free books," Dinah Bain said, a volunteer for the reading group.

Inside Round Robin, a crowd of customers sifted through the pieces. Volunteers chatted with longtime customers, greeting them and explaining the event layout as they shopped. Many families came in with their children, who especially enjoyed the rock painting and baked goods.

Students from the college also attended, excited by the festivities in the Marble Works parking lot.

"We just stumbled across this place because we were at the plant shop, and the guy at the front told us that there was a little event over here. And then we saw people painting rocks for free, and we were like, 'Oh, my goodness, we need to go there.' The lemonade is also really cute, really reminds me of spring," Lillian Tracy '29 said. Tracy stated that she has been to Round Robin before with her friends and appreciated their selection.

Lena Chow '29 also attended the 50th anniversary, hoping to find something unique.

"I really love Round Robin because it's a wonderful community thrift shop that's locally run, so close to the college," Chow remarked. "I think it's great that because of the amount of donations they get, there's a constant rotation. So, week to week, you never know what you are going to find. The ladies there are also really easy to chat with – super nice and helpful."

GREEN MOUNTAIN JUSTICE PROVIDES CARE TO VERMONT'S UNHOUSED POPULATION

By ETHAN CAMPBELL
Contributing Writer

Vermont has the fourth-highest rate of unhoused people per capita, at a rate of over 55 people per 100,000 people. This is two times the national average, with the state currently being short 36,000 affordable housing units. In communities like Middlebury, people are often shielded from this reality; however, some community members are forced to contend with unstable housing situations.

In Vermont, systemic and structural barriers prevent some residents from obtaining secure housing. Average hourly wages in Vermont are lower than in other New England states, and the state's rural geography poses challenges in accessing services and resources. Together, these factors can prevent those facing income constraints from accessing healthcare or other basic service needs. Additionally, weather events such as extreme temperatures and the 2023 flooding, further upend housing security, which is often linked to other forms of economic hardship, such as food insecurity and limited access to essential health services.

Addison County-based organization Green Mountain Justice (GMJ) centers their efforts around the humanity of those living on the margins through care, connection, and collaboration. They carry out this mission through their Neighbor Care Neighbors Network, curating a network of community outreach and support for the county and the broader Vermont area. GMJ hopes to expand this network and model of care to other counties in Vermont, furthering their reach and message.

"Our mission is to raise the voices and the narratives of our marginalized neighbors. We focus on the needs of the marginalized neighbors and we work around the values of Unitarian Universalism. So the values of interdependence, justice, equity, generosity, pluralism, and transformation", Tom Morgan, founder of Green Mountain Justice, said in an interview with the Campus.

Currently, many housing policies which, if enacted, would pose significant challenges for those facing housing insecurity, are being considered by the Vermont legislature. For example, Bill H. 772 would remove tenants' right to a jury trial in eviction cases, allow a landlord to evict a tenant who protested changes to a current lease, and reduce, and sometimes eliminate, the required notice period before the tenant's termination date. Additionally, within the same bill, the eviction process would be reduced from 21 days to five days, drastically increasing evictions in the state.

Vermont is in a unique position as the seventh coldest state in the country. As climate change intensifies, warmer polar temperatures push frigid air towards the Northern states, intensifying cold snaps in Vermont. Vermont's Cold Weather Shelter Program, which is designed to support community-based emergency shelter operations, requires shelters to open their doors only when temperatures are forecast to be at or below -10 degrees Fahrenheit. As Vermont's winters become more intense, people facing housing insecurity will be at greater risk from these adverse weather conditions.

Extreme weather events are not limited to cold snaps. Exacerbated by climate change, summers are becoming warmer, and rivers are flooding more frequently. People experiencing housing insecurity lack access to refuge spaces from the heat or rain, facing significant health risks.

The Neighbor Care Neighbor Network is rewarding work that challenges beliefs and stigmas and creates lasting relationships amongst its volunteers.

Morgan reflected on his personal experience being involved with GMJ. This outreach process has had a lasting impact on both those who conduct it and those who receive support.

"The most meaningful part of this work is the personal relationships that you develop with people – we have been so fortunate in Green Mountain Justice to have established some amazing relationships and stay with those relationships and really journey with people," Morgan said.

For Morgan and other members of GMJ, the relationships formed with community members are the most important work to bridge the gap between underserved members of our Vermont community and those who are more privileged.

As one of the first members of the Neighbor Care Network, he recognizes the importance of showing up for others and the power of listening to other people's stories.

It takes courage and intention to create these connections. GMJ calls upon the Middlebury community to act. Setty Provencher, a local community member, advises community members to "just show up, you know, say hi, but just listen and observe and … connect the dots."

Gordon Gibson, one of GMJ's board members, describes his work connecting with neighbors as some of the most challenging yet rewarding he has ever done. He has learned to be patient and compassionate, standing by neighbors in some of their most pressing times of need.

"It's not a service-based response to need. It's more of a relationship-based approach to stand with individuals in their time of extreme distress and help them connect and establish meaningful relationships," Gibson said.

College students, professors, and citizens can be present in their community and connect with local community members by getting involved with GMJ.

"Be brave enough to discuss these challenging conversations around marginalization and injustice. Justice starts in our community, and it starts with simple actions. Reach out to Green Mountain Justice if you are interested in becoming a Neighbor Care Neighbor volunteer to form meaningful connections with members of our community and create real change," Morgan said.

Students turn out to support Green Up Day, collecting trash around Addison County

ANNA DOUCET / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On Green Up Day and during the week leading up to it, thousands of volunteers help to pick up hundreds of tons of trash.

By ANNA DOUCET
Staff Writer

This past Saturday, Vermont hosted its annual Green Up Day, a statewide effort to clean up Vermont's roadways and natural spaces. The tradition first started in 1970 after being formalized by the state legislature. Since then, Vermonters have banded together every year on the first Satvurday of May to ensure that the state remains as beautiful and green as possible.

On Green Up Day and during the week leading up to it, thousands of volunteers help to pick up hundreds of tons of trash. In 2025, Green Up Vermont reported that more than 25,000 volunteers cleaned up 95% of all roads in Vermont, picking up 427,000 tons of trash across the state.

The event is managed by volunteer coordinators from each town, who help community members obtain trash bags and other supplies to safely green up. Rebecca Trombley serves as the coordinator for her hometown of Starksboro.

"My job as coordinator is to get the word out, get the supplies to volunteers, and collect data for the organization. Collecting data is actually kind of tough, because we have so many stealth volunteers! So many people are working quietly, picking up the trash, and don't necessarily feel a need to report their work. But the data does help keep the funding going for Green Up," Trombley shared.

Each year, more and more local residents join in on the Green Up Day tradition.

"Vermonters take a lot of pride in our state. We value our natural landscape. I think that is why we are able to get such great participation for Green Up day every year. Community interest and involvement has always been robust across the state. Year after year, I have faithful volunteers tending to their stretch of road, and every year new folks join in," Trombley said.

Chad Chamberlain, a Ripton resident, was one of many people who participated in Green Up Day. For him, it is an annual tradition.

"We try to get out every year, and we try to do at least a section of the road that we're on," Chamberlain said in an interview with the Campus. "You can sign up for various sections at the town hall, and you get every road in town covered by someone."

Chamberlain, like many other Vermont residents, sees Green Up Day as a chance to get involved and work to better his local community.

"I think it's a way of taking care of your immediate neighborhood, and it's a way to give back," Chamberlain added. "You drive on the roads every day, and you see the trash, and you think somebody should be picking that up, so why not me?"

Besides individual community members, many environmental organizations also help make Green Up Day possible. Middlebury College's Student Government Association (SGA) Environmental Sustainability Committee led a trash pickup competition. Students were able to form teams of four to ten people and compete to win declining balance for each member of their team.

"The goal for the Green Up Vermont competition was to get Middlebury students involved in the greater Vermont community in a statewide tradition that highlights our mission as SGA Environmental Sustainability. We know students can get busy this time of year, and we thought that by creating a competition, this would be a fun way to give back to the community and step away from the books," SGA Environmental Sustainability member Sophia Galuppo '26.5 said.

The competition, coordinated with the Green Up Vermont organizers, aimed to get more students involved in Green Up Day.

"SGA Environmental Sustainability collaborated with the Green Up organizers to facilitate more ease in getting students involved, such as providing trash bags and other supplies and designating easy drop-off locations. We care a lot about the environment and community and believe a friendly competition was a great way to bring the two together," Galuppo explained.

Lily Jensen '28 and her team won the competition.

"I think it was really great to get outside in the morning at a time where people were really overwhelmed with work and to assemble an eclectic crew of different friends from different groups who were interested, so it was a really fun and spontaneous adventure," Jensen shared.

Even students who didn't participate in the SGA Environmental Sustainability competition found ways to help out with the Green Up Day efforts. The student organization Sunday Night Environmental Group hosted a hike for members at Chipman Hill, during which they cleaned up the trail.

Jeremy Buss '29 led the hike and said he encouraged the group to look out for garbage along the trail.

"We came together and picked up trash as we walked. Being in a community together, being with nature, and removing trash is a really valuable experience for us," Buss said.

Although Green Up Day 2026 is now over, interested students can keep an eye out for next year's activities while making a daily conscious effort to keep the state clean.

Editor's note: Lily Jensen '28 is a staff writer for The Campus.

THE 121ST YEAR OF STUDENT REPORTING

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Susanna Schatz

For the 121st year in a row, the Middlebury Campus continued its mission of fair, thorough and valuable reporting for the Middlebury community. In a year of transition, we reported on the inauguration of President Ian Baucom, the closing of the Institute at Monterrey, and the opening of New Battell, while Stewart Hall undergoes renovation. Debates over the role of AI in academia, free speech on campus, grade inflation, mental health support, tuition increases and budget cuts, among other issues, have amplified the sense of substantial change on campus.

Unfortunately, for the college community and those of us at The Campus, this year has also been one of continuity. The immense grief of our fourth student death in six years stirred conversation about support for marginalized communities and the isolation that many students feel. National and global insecurity, especially the Trump administration's recent visa bans and war with Iran, have created profound uncertainty and grief for students both on campus and abroad. The Campus has been there, reporting everything for all our readers.

We are still a school that is exciting, alive and growing. We reported on Nocturne and the Spring Symposium as recent examples of students showcasing their interests and talents in ways that engage the broader Middlebury community. We reported on innovative programs that bring international students to Middlebury.

Each of our five sections has made a consistent effort to document, engage with, and give voice to our community.

The News section reported on the impactful events that have shaped the past year, on both small and large scales. Pieces ranged from coverage of a community panel for the Transgender Day of Visibility or writing about the staff who keep Middlebury running after a snowstorm, to discussion of the geopolitical forces that put pressure on international students or the ways in which AI is impacting the job market. This broad scope of topics and writers highlights the diversity of interests and ideas on campus and can bring to light issues readers might not often consider.

The Local section covered everything from protests to salamander-crossing events, helping to link our college to the incredible town and the local people who live in Addison County. We covered the Town of Middlebury's 10% increase in property taxes, and the incredible work done by the Open Door Clinic, which provides free health care for migrant workers and underinsured Vermonters. The college can feel like a bubble at times, and organizations like the Better Middlebury Partnership emphasize the importance of student involvement in the town.

The innovative Arts & Culture (A&C) section covered the revival of M Gallery, the political advocacy of a recent Bread & Puppet show, and the new mural in Proctor dining hall that draws from the ArtLords movement in Afghanistan. It also offered space for student artist highlights through editor Christy Liang's '28 Conversational Art column, which showcased individual artists as well as events like a zine release party. With weekly crosswords, photo gallery features, and interview profiles, A&C showcases the immense talent in our community.

The Opinion section received notable traffic this year. With students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members contributing, we hosted discussions on politics, AI ethics, and responses to campus events, such as a protest at an alumni event and growing wealth disparity at Middlebury. The Campus is one of the best forums for free and fair speech at Middlebury, and we accepted over ten letters to the editor that offered dialogue on divisive issues. At a time when the protection of free speech is being debated on campus, this space allows for discussion and the sharing of ideas. Our weekly editorial board called for less bureaucracy from the Student Activities Office, fairer grading from faculty, and endorsed the winning SGA presidential candidate. As always, submit to this section by emailing campus@middlebury.edu.

Notably, this year's Sports section went above and beyond in the variety of its reporting. Moving beyond traditional game coverage, the sports desk discussed the retirement of Erin Quinn, student and athlete traditions at the Winter Carnival, an interview with Bob Spaulding, who drives the bus for the men's soccer and hockey teams, and more. Columns like Amateur vs. Athlete and Tapped-in provided a unique perspective into the side of sports that most people don't see. We commended this desk for its innovative approach to reporting.

The Campus provides a window into sides of campus that we might not be familiar with. We are not the curated material coming out of administrative offices. We want to continue our mission of reporting the on-the-ground reality for students, staff and faculty alike. A recent article about Proctor Dining Hall staff Marin Melchior's knitting company offers insight into the life of someone you might see daily in Proctor but otherwise know little about. By creating a weekly record of the niche and interesting happenings around Middlebury, we strive to create connections and help people see more of campus.

At a time when AI feels like a threat to the integrity of writing, The Campus was proud to receive the 2025 New England College Newspaper of the Year award from the New England Newspaper and Press Association (NENPA). It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our writers and editors, but also to the importance of local engagement. Student journalism can be a form of resistance to the tide of AI writing by maintaining the integrity and enthusiasm that make The Campus a valuable part of Middlebury. We are excited about the revival of the Blackbird literary magazine and the Clover fashion magazine, and hope this sparks a new resurgence in print media across Middlebury.

Zeitgeist, now in its eighth rendition, is another example of our commitment to understanding and representing the community. An enormous amount of work goes into formulating questions, promoting the survey, and analyzing results, all with the ultimate goal of understanding the way that students are thinking and feeling about their experience of Middlebury.

The purpose of The Campus is to represent the college community. Every person's experience here is unique, and at a time when marginalized voices are less heard and communities are being threatened by global and national politics, the opportunity for their stories to be told is valuable for both those writing and those reading. The Campus and its ability to elevate issues important to students stem from its involvement in the community and the range of perspectives brought by its participants as they write, edit, and produce the paper every week. Collectively, we spend hundreds of hours reporting and making sure the paper is ready for Thursday morning (shoutout to our friends on the crew team for their delivery services).

Goodbye to our graduating ed-board seniors, in alphabetical order: Maya Alexander '26, Curran Amster '26, Mandy Berghela '26, Cole Chaudhari '26, Sailor Kabeary '26.5, Lucy Schembre '26.5, Simon Schmieder '26, Katrina Schwarz '26, Yuvraj Shah '26, Ellie Trinkle '26. Thank you to all our writers, editors, photographers, layout and online staff and all contributors. Thank you to everyone who has provided us with news tips and has let us interview you. Above all, thank you to all our readers. The Campus will be back in September, as always, on Thursday. Pick up a copy (or refresh your browser tab), and give us another read.

Notes from the desk: No experience required. We mean it.

Op-Ed

***Yuvraj Shah** is a member of the class of 2026 and managing editor.*

"No experience required." When I read that The Campus was hiring a new opinions editor, I was excited to apply. I had close to zero experience editing writing, let alone articles for a print newspaper. Nevertheless, I took the "no experience required" to heart, and as I look back, I encourage anyone, regardless of your journalism experience, to join The Campus and help us advance our mission of impartial, fact-driven student journalism.

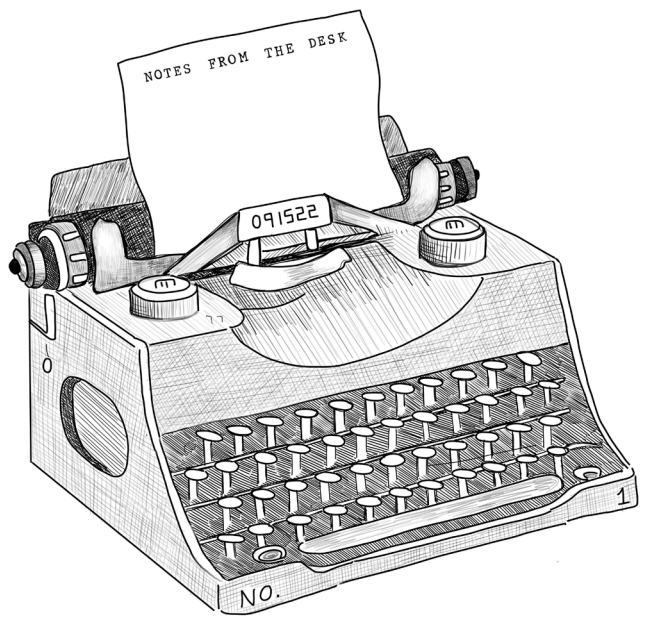
The Middlebury Campus is one of the few regular, widely accessible and independent forums where all members of our community can express successes and grievances with the college. But the only way that this can happen is through our incredible team of writers, photographers, editors and online staff, many of whom joined with little to no experience.

In January of this year, I was lucky to become the managing editor of The Campus. Up until this point, I had written a grand total of zero news articles independently. My first article, written after I became managing editor, was about the faculty panel on the United States' war in Iran. I felt a large sense of imposter syndrome writing this article, knowing that even as a managing editor, I had no experience to fall back on. While I had a range of editing experience, having worked as an opinions editor and then as a senior opinions editor for over two years, writing a news article was entirely new. Reaching out to interviewees, condensing hour-long transcripts into two or three quotes and meticulously fact-checking all statements. For my first piece in particular, I was especially concerned about accidentally misquoting someone, which is not something you want to do when discussing the Middle East or Israel.

Nevertheless, I published my first article and immediately began planning my next. I am from Nairobi, Kenya, and I wanted to leave a small mark on the paper by writing about my home country. And so, with the help of Karen Bartlett, associate director of international admissions, I was able to connect with Alan Davidson, executive director at Kenya Scholars Access Program (KenSAP). KenSAP is an incredible organisation that brings high-achieving Kenyan scholars to Middlebury, many of whom would not have had the opportunity to enrol here without the organisation. I am very proud of this piece. Coverage about international students nationwide has been negative and depressing. I wanted to play a small part in reminding the community of the incredible stories international students share and the value they bring to a very homogeneous student body.

It is probably safe to say I am the least experienced managing editor The Campus has had in over five years, maybe even a decade. After all, I will graduate having written fewer than ten news articles. However, even with a tiny sense of impostor syndrome every time I send my article drafts to the news desk to edit, I am heartened and warmed by how friendly and welcoming the Campus staff are. Whether it is section editors helping me restructure my articles, layout editors teaching me more about Adobe InDesign, online editors helping me correct spelling mistakes, or our editor in chief, coaching me about how to make the final changes to our paper before we send it to print, we are a student paper that leans on each other.

Writing for The Campus can be as simple as identifying something you are passionate about, emailing us at campus@middlebury.edu and working with a section to turn that passion into a published article. Want to feature a cool class project? Have you witnessed an injustice in class or your dorms? Watched a cool play at the Hepburn Zoo? Tried a new dish at Taste of India? We want to hear more, and we want to print it.



The Campus is made up of many incredible people. You do not just have to be a writer. Are you interested in photography? Do you enjoy drawing graphics? Want to learn how to use Adobe InDesign? Interested in helping keep our website running smoothly? Are you someone who hates the Oxford comma? Help us! We always need copy editors.

In my time at Middlebury, I believe The Campus has finally transformed into a "no experience required" paper. I hope that this continues well into the future, and I encourage anyone reading this to work with us.

No experience is required to join our staff. Let me serve as a testament to that.

Notes from the desk: What journalism is…and is not

Op-Ed

__Mandy Berghela__ is a member of the class of 2026 and Editor in Chief.

The Middlebury Campus has been student-run since 1905. It is editorially independent. This past semester, MiddStories, the publication of Middlebury's Office of Communications, began publishing on the same day of the week as The Middlebury Campus. That overlap matters a bit more than it may seem.

Last month, I heard someone mention in my class if the Campus was the same as MiddStories.

I quickly clarified that the Campus is entirely separate. The Campus is student-run, while MiddStories is produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing. But that moment, along with other moments like it, has been in my mind a lot now that I am about to graduate and say goodbye to the Campus. It is part of why I wanted my final article, after four years on this staff, to reflect on this distinction and why it matters.

I do want to be very clear about some things, though. MiddStories is very well-written, professionally produced and it reflects a genuine care for the community. The people behind it are good at their jobs.

But I also want to say this directly and make the distinction that MiddStories is not news in a journalistic sense. And the scheduling overlap is not a small thing, in my opinion. It causes confusion, and that is a problem.

When you type "go/news" into a Middlebury browser, it is MiddStories that appears. When you search "Middlebury College news," MiddStories often surfaces before The Campus. That matters to me because what readers encounter first shapes how they understand what "news" on this campus is. And MiddStories, while valuable, is ultimately promotional material produced by the institution, not news.

That distinction has a weight to it that I don't think can be overstated. Like many other political science majors here, I have read Schmitter and Karl's "What Democracy Is...and Is Not" numerous times. The text has been engrained in my thinking, in part because the defining question of my college experience has been democratic backsliding in the United States — what the warning signs are, and whether we are seeing them.

Spoiler: Without a free press, you do not have a democracy.

Student journalism is, at its core, an act of independence. It is free press. When writers on the Campus cover a story, we do so without asking the administration for permission or review. Our editorial decisions are made by students such as myself, not by the institution. We write about student grievances: the lack of transparency surrounding campus camera installations and debates over grade inflation. We write about impacts on federal politics in our community, such as international students navigating profound uncertainty with new immigration policy. Every year we launch the Zeitgeist, an annual student survey where we ask questions the institution would never ask. We can do this because we are student-run. We can do this because we are independent.

I want to clarify that the college administration has not encroached on the independence of the Campus whatsoever, and I have not experienced pressure from administrators to hold stories. Our independence has been respected, and I expect that the administration will keep this going. So, the concern I am raising is not about direct suppression, it is rather clarifying what journalism is and is not.

Unlike The Campus, MiddStories is run by the institution's communications office, which means it will not break stories that embarrass the institution. It cannot. Their incentives do not allow it. That is not a flaw necessarily; it is a structural reality. MiddStories celebrates student and alumni achievements, profiles faculty research updates and presents the college in the best light. There is nothing wrong with that, as every college needs to communicate with its community.

Journalism exists in such a different realm than public relations, and I argue that that difference is the whole point, because, you know, when both publications land on the same day and both are labeled as "news," that distinction becomes a little harder to see.

I am not asking MiddStories to stop publishing, or to be less good at what it does. I am instead asking for three things from different people.

First, I would ask the Middlebury Office of Communications to consider the publication-day overlap not as a matter of competitive courtesy, but as a question of clarity for readers, as there has been confusion. A different publication day would signal that MiddStories and the Campus have different relationships to this institution.

Second, I would ask this community — students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni — to think carefully about how you consume your media on campus. Read MiddStories. Enjoy it. But also read The Campus, and read it knowing what it is: a publication that belongs to students, not to the institution, staffed by students who give so many hours of unpaid work to making sure this campus community has a paper each Thursday, and has been since 1905.

Third, I would ask Middlebury students to get involved and join the Campus. Student journalism has been the most important contribution I have made to this community by far, and certainly the most rewarding. Independent student journalism does not sustain itself, there has to be people who care enough to show up each week.

As of 2026, only 18 states have laws that protect student press freedoms. 18/50. This means in 32 states, a public school administration can legally direct, censor or shut down a student publication with no legal recourse for the students involved. Vermont is protected by the New Voices Law but protection on paper is not the same as a community that values what that protection makes possible.

There are so many ways to get involved with the Campus. You could write articles in any of our sections, contribute occasionally with op-eds, work on layout, take photos or even make cartoons! These contributions may seem small, but collectively they are what allow independent student journalism to exist at all.

As I sign off on my last story, I think back across four years, 50 bylines, and hundreds of stories edited. What journalism is, I think, is the thing that can hold any power accountable without asking its permission. What it is not is something you should ever mistake for the institution speaking for itself and it is not something that our campus can afford to lose.

With that, I hope to read your name on the byline next.

MAKE MIDDLEBURY GREAT AGAIN

Op-Ed

__Ignacio N. Gamero__ is a member of the class of 2026.

As I prepare to leave this bubble for the real world at the end of the month, I find myself, like any senior, reflecting on my time at Middlebury. And truthfully, I am grateful.

Middlebury has given me opportunities I could not have imagined. I studied abroad in Madrid, I interned at a U.S. Embassy, canoed through Canyonlands National Park in Utah, skied the mountains of New England, and coached spin classes. More importantly, it gave me one of the best educations in the world and forced me to develop critical thinking and, whether I liked it or not, thick skin. The reality is, the last part wasn't optional.

This past year, as part of the leadership team of the Middlebury College Republicans (MCR), I experienced everything from praise by college leadership and national-level figures, including President Obama's speechwriter, to threats, false accusations, and targeted harassment. I became an icon living rent-free in people's minds. Professors I've never met have discussed me by name in their classes, and someone even wrote 'F––ing Nazi' on the whiteboard outside my room. People who have never spoken to me have called me a racist, a fascist, or wished me dead.

And yet, had any of these people — most of whom hide behind anonymous screens — taken the time to speak to me or attend an MCR meeting, they would know something very simple: their assumptions are wrong.

This is where the problem becomes bigger than me. Politics at Middlebury and around the country has become deeply personal. Once disagreement becomes moralized, conversation stops; people stop engaging and start judging. I've had people who once considered themselves my friends tell me I am a bad person with no morals. The funny part is, the only thing that changed was not who I am, but how they chose to see me.

While all of this was happening, I was writing a political science senior thesis titled 'Silent or Silenced', a study of what many at Middlebury call the 'closeted conservative.' My findings were clear: conservative students often self-censor not because they lack ideas, but because they fear social repercussions, being ostracized, and labeled on a campus where dissenting views are too often met with intolerance rather than engagement.

My data make this dynamic hard to ignore. 75% of liberals report that classroom discussions feel open, compared to just 23% of conservatives — a gap of over 50 percentage points. And that divide doesn't just reflect different perceptions; it drives behavior. As perceived openness declines, self-censorship rises sharply, from 34% of liberals to 78% of conservatives, suggesting that the cost of speaking is not evenly distributed across the student body.

But fear not, I do believe there is a path forward!

Over the past year, I've also seen what happens when people choose to engage differently. Joint efforts between College Republicans and College Democrats, despite criticism and accusations of being performative, have worked. It shows that a 'Great Middlebury' is still possible.

'Making Middlebury Great Again' does not mean going backwards. It means restoring what a liberal arts education is supposed to be: exposure to different ideas, the ability to challenge and be challenged, and the understanding that discomfort is not the same thing as harm.

But it also requires action. First, harassment, whether anonymous or public, must be taken seriously, not dismissed as 'just free speech.' Targeted insults, doxxing, or posts and articles that single out students or groups should face clear, consistent consequences as violations of community standards, with clear reporting mechanisms and predictable outcomes. A student should not have to wonder whether being publicly labeled or surveilled for their views will be ignored simply because it happens online or under the guise of 'free speech.' Second, the College should make a conscious effort to expose genuine viewpoint diversity through speakers, panels, and coursework that present real ideological disagreement, not just variations of the same perspective. Third, faculty and leadership should be more aware of how their own signaling shapes the classroom; when certain views are repeatedly affirmed as 'correct' or morally framed, it sends a message about what is acceptable to say. Without these changes, and others highlighted in my thesis, the culture will not shift.

As I prepare to graduate, I don't leave with resentment. I leave with perspective.

To those who wished ill on me, I pray you find the peace to move past that anger. To my fellow conservatives: as Charlie Kirk said, if you believe in something, have the courage to say it. To the many members of the Democratic Party on this campus: Live up to the tolerance and openness you preach. And to everyone: Stop viewing the other side as villains.

Because if we can do that, if we can engage rather than dismiss, we might realize something simple: Despite everything, we all want this school to be better.

And if that's true, maybe, together we can Make Middlebury Great Again.

The Middlebury Campus

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@middleburycampus

CONVERSATION OVER CONFLICT

Op-Ed

***Joseph Jacobson** is a member of the class of 2027.*

This Monday, I stood alongside Middlebury College Democrats co-presidents Erik Ghalib ’28.5 and Lucas Basham ’28 and fellow College Republicans leader Ignacio Gamero ’26 as we were recognized for organizing a series of joint meetings between our groups—conversations focused on fostering civil, productive political dialogue that, not long ago, would have felt unlikely on this campus. It’s the kind of dialogue I set out to make possible when I restarted the Middlebury College Republicans (MCR) in 2024 — building space for healthy discourse across differences, grounded in the belief that viewpoint diversity and free expression are fundamental to a liberal arts education.

What led to that moment wasn’t inevitable — and it would certainly take more than restarting a club. There was a clear absence of spaces where students could engage in substantive political discussion across differences. Addressing that began with building a presence that would broaden the range of perspectives on campus. It didn’t take long to see how quickly labels can shape expectations — or how difficult it can be to build something that challenges them. Doing so required becoming comfortable being uncomfortable, but I pushed forward, trusting that the organization would be judged by what it built, not what it was assumed to represent.

I was disappointed when I came to campus and found that free speech and viewpoint diversity were frequently paid lip service but rarely pursued. MCR became an organization focused on strengthening those values in practice. We created an environment where difference is not just expected, but encouraged — and where independent thinking matters more than partisan alignment. Many members, myself included, hold views that do not fit neatly into partisan boxes. What defines MCR is not uniformity, but a shared commitment to respect and civic engagement. Many students who aren’t Republican have remarked that our meetings are the best place to find robust debate on campus.

Responsible political leadership requires a willingness to engage across differences. Too often, we are encouraged to see those we disagree with as threats rather than classmates. I’ve seen firsthand how quickly disagreement can harden into division—and how often outrage is rewarded over understanding.

I’ve found that the most effective way to begin bridging that divide is through conversation. Conversations grounded in genuine engagement were consistently more productive than those grounded in assumptions. I’ve learned that being well-intentioned in creating change is only effective when you do your best to bring others in and work towards a common goal together. Coming together across differences to rally behind shared ideals is a classic American tradition — I’ve been fortunate to share a strong relationship with the College Democrats’ leadership, and both the leadership and membership of the clubs frequently attend each other’s meetings.

I’m proud to have organized the five joint Republican-Democrat meetings this school year in tandem with Ignacio Gamero’26 and the co-presidents of the College Democrats, key collaborations that brought together students who might not otherwise have engaged directly. Party affiliation is secondary to something more important — our country and shared humanity. MCR’s mission became more than just balancing political discourse — it became a mission to improve it.

It’s easy to remain in echo chambers that reinforce our own assumptions. In recent years, elite higher education has been criticized for doing just that—and Middlebury is no exception. However, institutions like Middlebury are worth engaging with precisely because of their potential. This experience has reinforced for me that meaningful change comes from holding institutions accountable instead of writing them off. At their best, they are places where ideas are tested, challenged, and refined through open inquiry — a strong culture of free speech and viewpoint diversity is essential to making this a reality.

Like anything valuable, such a culture requires careful cultivation and, at times, uncomfortable change. Nothing worth having comes easy — active effort from students, faculty, and the administration alike is required. As I’ve written before, the true promise of graduating from Middlebury is the ability to thrive in a diverse and challenging world. I’m proud of what we built and confident in the foundation that remains.

Vermont’s former governor and MCR’s advisor Jim Douglas ’72, reflecting on his time as president of the club when he was a student, opened the first joint meeting with “People didn’t always agree with me, but they never thought that I should not be heard.” This standard is one worth maintaining. I’m happy to report that our school is closer to that standard now than it was in 2024, thanks to students and faculty who are willing to engage across differences. The work is not complete — but the foundation is laid. Thank you for having the conversation — and for continuing it.

A new era of SGA: A letter from your incoming SGA executive team

Op-Ed

***Anina Dentel-Pham** is a member of the class of 2027 and SGA President-elect, **Connor McClellan** is a member of the class of 2028 and SGA VP-elect, and **Jeffrey Teh** is a member of the class of 2028 and SGA VP-elect.*

Dear Panthers. We’re Anina, Jeffrey, and Connor, your incoming SGA Executive Team. Thank you for entrusting us with the responsibility to serve you next year.

While our term doesn’t officially begin until Fall, we will be working throughout the summer to make sure we’re ready to hit the ground running on day one. We’ve already begun sorting out the logistics of a student bar with Dining, securing improvements to 10 O’Clock Ross, and researching laundry access.

To make lasting change and tackle issues like parking and laundry, we need your support.

If you are enthusiastic about making transformational improvements to the student experience and bringing a fresh perspective to issues across campus, we would love to have you on our team!

You should have received a message from SGA@middlebury.edu with information about how you can be part of the change. Cabinet positions are open, from Operations to DEI and Academic Affairs. All you have to do is apply. We will meet with each applicant to discuss which positions are most appealing to them. We encourage everyone who is interested to apply.

Election day was just the start of our journey to improve the student experience. On campus and abroad, in the dining halls and dorm buildings, our goal is to make Middlebury a place where everyone feels like they belong to a community bigger than themselves.

Whether you are new to student government or a returning member, we welcome your ideas and encourage your participation. Forget what you think you know about SGA… this is a new era! Join us to make your mark on Middlebury.

We want to thank you for your commitment to each other and dedication to making Middlebury a better place. Whether we knocked on your door or interrupted your dinner conversation, we truly appreciate all of the concerns and innovative ideas you shared.

We look forward to hearing from and working with you soon!

THE REMARKABLE POSITION WE FIND OURSELVES IN

Op-Ed

***Mary Elliot** is a member of the class of 2026.*

As a senior staring down the barrel of graduation, I have found myself increasingly unable to avoid the classic existential question: What the heck should I do with my life? More specifically, how can I leave my mark on the world? Medical school? Going into law? Nonprofit work? What’s the best way to help the most people I possibly can?

And yet, assuming we will all eventually find jobs (fingers crossed), purely as a result of our luck to find ourselves living in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, we will actually all be in a truly remarkable position to do good. If you earn $65,000 a year post-tax, you are in the top 1% globally. If you earn $100,000 a year (as a lot of us probably will), you land in the 99.9th percentile: the top 0.1%. You might argue that the cost of living in the US is far higher than other countries, and it is; but these percentiles are already adjusted for cost of living.

With such an incredible roll of the dice, we are given a huge gift: the ability to do immense good for other people without doing anything particularly extraordinary. How? Simply by donating a small part of our incomes to effective causes. Specifically, I’m talking about charities that aim to do as much good per dollar as possible and reduce the hundreds of thousands of deaths due to easily preventable diseases that happen every year. These charities work on areas like malaria medication and net distribution, access to vitamin A and increasing childhood vaccination rates. (GiveWell provides a great list).

To get a sense of how rich we really are, consider that if the top 1% of the world were to donate 10% of their income to the most effective charitable causes for just two years, we would be able to do all of the following (and still have some left over):

1. End extreme poverty for a year
2. End hunger and malnutrition
3. Provide clean water and sanitation for all
4. Prevent over 60% of maternal and newborn deaths
5. Massively suppress or eradicate most neglected tropical diseases
6. Double the amount spent on research and development for clean energy sources

Of course, 10% is actually a pretOf course, 10% is actually a pretty sizable amount of income to put aside, but consider something smaller, like 1%. With an income of $80,000, giving 1% a year means $800, or $66 a month. Over 5 years, you will have donated $4,000, which, according to GiveWell, is the amount the Malaria Consortium needs to save a human life. Most people will never get the chance to save even a single life during their time on earth, but if you donate 1% of an $80,000 income for 60 years, you can save a dozen lives. If you donate 5% of your income, then that’s 60 lives saved. If you are a high-earning banker (as many of us will be), then that number could easily reach into the hundreds.

What is perhaps the most remarkable thing about this is the extent to which it can be done without changing your life much at all. I don’t know about you, but I spend $66 a month just to satisfy my Depop addiction, and that’s without any real income (my ResLife paycheck aside).

Of course, it can feel pointless to ask an individual to step in and make small contributions to something as vast as fighting preventable disease when deep cuts to US foreign aid programs have cost hundreds of thousands of lives. An argument could also be made that a billionaire could sneeze and donate a million dollars to one of these charities, making an impact that would dwarf our lifetime donations. And to that, I would say: if you can find a way to increase foreign aid or convince billionaires to donate, then, for the love of God, do that instead. But if you have other plans and are simply looking to do some good in the world, then you might as well consider donating to the most effective charities. After all, very few people indeed find themselves in the incredible position we are in to save lives without even noticing.

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Let Us Sell or Find Your Roost!

MAKES YA FEEL: AND WITH THAT…

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

Gallery hoppers, Spotify stalkers, bookworms, Letterboxd users and anyone who enjoys art, this is the place for you. Makes Ya Feel highlights art across all of its mediums, small and large-scale, that (you guessed it) makes ya feel!

I categorize my experiences based on the things I enjoyed at a particular time. Often, this boils down to art; an album that provided a compelling soundtrack, a movie that I saw parts of myself in or a painting that imprinted itself upon me. I started this column a little over two years ago with the intention of having it as a time capsule, but it quickly became so much more.

I have not written a piece for this column all semester, not because I was too busy, but because I've been saving it for the last issue. I've been keeping score of what art has most accurately encapsulated my senior spring, and I am finally ready to share it. Although it feels like my goodbyes have become a laundry list, revisiting my senior spring this way has helped me to take a step back and appreciate it all.

Uncertainly certain: 'Ooh Rap I Ya' by George Clanton

Clanton's music is hard to cClanton's music is hard to categorize; it thrashes and whispers and flows. "Ooh Rap I Ya", Clanton's third studio album, is certainly no exception, operating within the tension between getting older yet wanting to feel young. Many songs on the album are simple in lyrics, often repeating a phrase or two, yet instrumentally layered. While this has been met with criticism, I have found it a perfect companion to my senior spring. When even the small things like weather feel so uncertain, it's nice to have a few mantras bouncing between your ears.

The titular track features Clanton's signature drawl as he claims "The best times are yet to come / To spend life split tangled up" before a jazzy instrumental break washes over, splitting hairs in its mystical honesty. In contrast to this hopefulness, "F.U.M.L." is a noisy confession where Clanton laments, "And I'm feeling like I'm fucking up my life" while sporadic beeps and lasers interject. The tension between these two songs perfectly encapsulates the question that permeates all young people's minds; how do you look forwards when you feel like you're pushing yourself backwards?

"Everything I Want", is a cosmic love song where Clanton claims "I would never leave my room / If I close my eyes and see / No one but you." It's a sprawl where desire and appreciation become dependent on one another. In my favorite track, "I've Been Young", Clanton's drawl becomes a whine that yells "Can't you see how life is blinding you? / Growing up is never easy."

"Ooh Rap I Ya" is an album where reconciliations puncture your ears, honesty seeps into the cracks, everything is in flux and yet there is something glorious to find within it all.

SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Going beyond: 'Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives' by Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Weerasethakul is a Thai independent film director, writer and producer known for blending ordinary life with mystical worlds. "Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives" follows a Boonmee, who is slowly dying. In this limbo, he is able to reconnect with those from his past, some who have been dead for quite some time and some who he has lost touch with. It is also how we learn more about Boonmee's life.

What makes the film particularly compelling is that nothing is explained; Boonmee's son appears at the dinner table as a hairy beast with glowing red eyes, spirits come and go and a princess guides Boonmee to a strange waterfall. As we go down these ghostly pathways of memory, we also learn that Boonmee has some regrets, making the past something that is both sentimental and haunting.

My favorite parts of the film are the open, wide shots that invite you to look at every corner of your screen. The pacing of the film moves slowly, and thus the camera follows suit. What results is a meditative and verdant world that lets you get comfortable in it.

While the mythical elements may initially seem bizarre, they are ultimately used to depict a very human experience; that it is hard to know what lies ahead, but we can always hold onto pieces of ourselves, even when they are hard to come to terms with. Which, to me, feels like an incredibly fitting reminder for the end of my senior year.

Packing up: 'The House on Mango Street' by Sandra Cisneros

I reread this book the summer before senior year began, and it touched me even more deeply on the reread. Cisneros writes about Esperanza Cordero, a young girl growing up in Chicago who faces marginalization both as a Mexican-American and as a woman.

My favorite part about the book is how Cisneros writes about memory. We experience Esperanza's childhood through fragmented stories; the small pieces that stuck with her as she grew up and eventually moved away from Mango Street. It is such a true thing, that we remember our life through the parts that get stuck onto us, but I haven't seen it represented as well as in this book.

"I carry my house on my back," Cisneros writes. For Esperanza, the fragments are all a part of her. All the beautiful and terrible parts of her childhood have culminated into the person she is today. After I finished reading the book, I went back and thought about the fragments that make me up.

It's often difficult to take a step back and consider each piece of ourselves, but as Cisneros reminds us, we carry it all on our backs. As I begin to shove my belongings into boxes for the last time, I'll be sure to remember each piece, like this one.

'LAYLIT' RETURNS: ARAB EDM SHIFTS PERSPECTIVES ON THE DANCE FLOOR

By ANNA ARMSTRONG
Contributing Writer

Booming beats, colorful flashing lights and crowds of Middlebury College students packed the Freeman International Center (FIC) Bunker in the late hours of April 17. This second edition of 'Laylit' at Middlebury — the annual party sponsored by the Arabic Department in collaboration with the student organizations WRMC radio station; Pan-African, Latino, Asian, and Native American Intercultural Academic Interest House (PALANA) and West Asian and North African Students (WANAS) — featured prominent DJs performing "Live EDM from the Arab World," and a night to remember for all the attendees.

'Laylit' was DJ'd by Wake Island, a Montreal based duo formed by Nadim Maghzal and MNSA (Philippe Manasseh). The duo's high-quality music and lighting production transformed the Bunker into a club-like environment, with students flowing in from 10 p.m. to as late as 2 a.m.

The duo co-founded Laylit in New York City in 2018 to celebrate the diversity of Middle-Eastern and North African (MENA) music in the party scene. They have been bringing their party series to various hubs along the East Coast of the U.S. and Canada since its founding.

First-time attendee Audrey Snowbeck '28.5 commented on the liveliness of the party scene.

"It was very fun, and very crowded, and very hot," Snowbeck said. "It was so packed with people, which was awesome because sometimes I go to a social house and it'll be half empty, which is kind of hit or miss."

The music at the "Arabic rave," as Henry Putnam '28 noted, reached a wide range of both new and returning audience members and featured a variety of tracks not often played at parties across campus.

"I would have never had the opportunity to listen to music like that, and had no idea that I would like it nearly as much as I did," Putnam said.

Though he expected the school-wide event to be on the more subdued side, Putnam, by contrast, found Laylit to be an extremely fun experience. Laylit's unique mediums of music were a welcome shift away from the typical dance playlists often heard on a weekend night out.

"I walked away with a number of new Arabic songs that I had no idea that existed," Putnam said. "It's just a great time to, you know, learn about music, how there's more nuances and caveats to different cultures across the world than just what we're exposed to just because of Western media."

Bo Young '28, a second-time attendee, similarly noted the importance of hosting an event like Laylit on campus to renew preconceptions about Arabic music that audience members often hold, particularly in the global west and at Middlebury.

"I think there is still a stigma of what Arabic music means, and it always has to have a religious message or… 'It's always gonna be like a political message,'"Young said.

Mainstream media representation of the Arab world is often skewed, as only specific aspects of the region are highlighted. This, Snowbeck expressed, is an important reason as to why experiences on campus, such as Laylit, are beneficial for the student body.

"Any image that's maybe a counter to, like, a state-sponsored one is important," Snowbeck said.

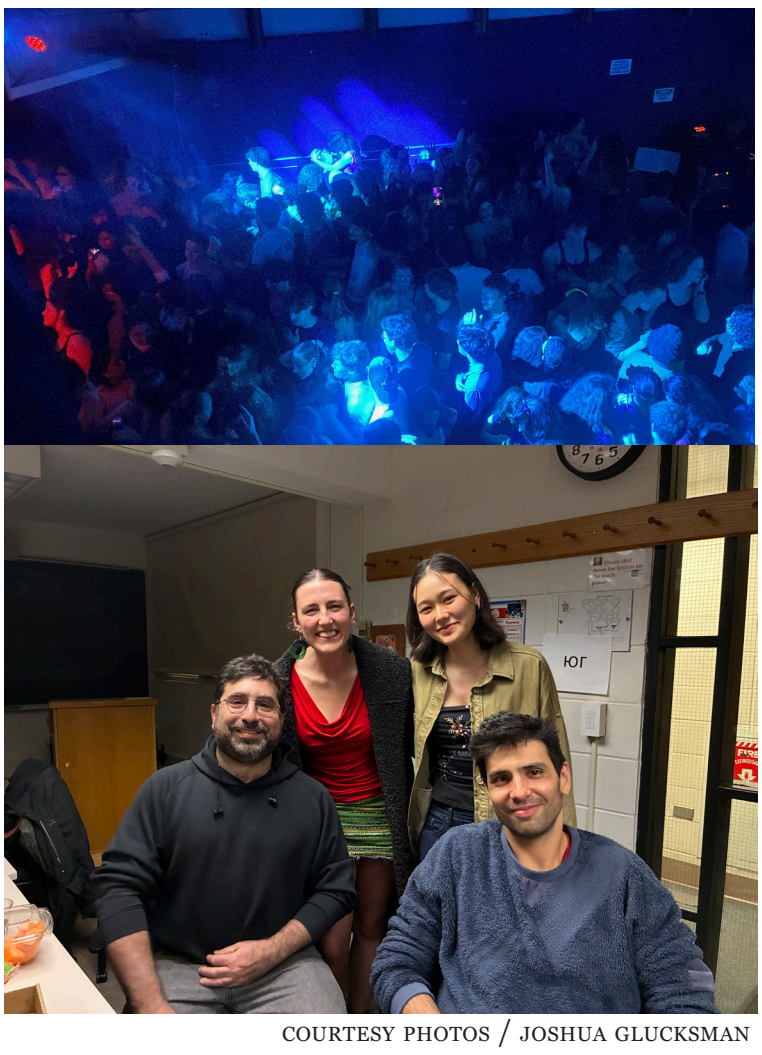
Furthermore, rather than gaining new understandings through our screens, namely, news platforms and social media, Laylit provided a space for the universal experience of music and dance to do the talking, and allowed for students to experience culture viscerally.

"[The audience] equated hype music with Arabic music, which, I think, is an association that's coming from experience rather than stereotypes, or like past, perceived knowledge… which I think is really important when we talk about making music accessible, and making experiences with music that's not from your own culture [accessible]," Young said.

It is important to note that Laylit's "Arabic rave" experience is selectively curated for the Middlebury demographic. The songs selected and mixed by the DJs, which included hints of well-known, well-played Western songs, provided an accessible way for students to gain greater exposure to Arabic music.

"There's something super consumable about like, an EDM bass, with, like, 'Ahla Leila, Ahla Nas' on top," Young said, quoting the song "Ma Tnsani (Yalla Habibi)" by Vanco and AYA. "They mix in a lot of English songs too."

The DJs played songs in Arabic, English and other languages such as Spanish and French, while combining them with overlays of musical textures unique to the Arab World. Laylit 2.0 once again demonstrated this year that music, no matter the genre, language, or region it originated from, can serve as a language that needs no translation, bringing communities like Middlebury together through the joy and excitement of song and dance.



COURTESY PHOTOS / JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN

1. Birds eye photo of students at the Laylit rave.
2. Laylit DJ's and student organizers at the event

In attendance at Laylit was co-organizer Dima Ayoub, associate professor of Arabic, and Lana Povitz, associate professor of history.

"I went to the event to support Dima, but also I love the DJs and the music, and I love everything that the Arabic department does. All of this outweighs my embarrassment about partying with students," Povitz said in an interview with The Campus.

Editor's note: Contributing writer Maddy Russell '26 contributed reporting to this article.

‘NAFI’S FATHER’: AN AUTHENTIC AND FRESH NARRATIVE OF WEST AFRICA

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Editor at Large

Senegalese writer-director Mamadou Dia’s “Nafi’s Father (Baamum Nafi)” is a personal and gripping examination of political, religious, familial and moral intersections in modern-day West Africa. A debut from Dia, a Visiting Assistant Professor in Harvard’s Art, Film, and Visual Studies Department, the 2019 film won the Best First Feature award at the Locarno Film Festival, became Senegal’s official Oscar submission and was screened at over 80 festivals worldwide.

The Middlebury community had the honor of watching the film on April 27 in Dana Auditorium thanks to the Black Studies, International and Global Studies and African Studies and the Lois ’51 and J. Harvey Watson Department of French and Francophone Studies. The screening was accompanied by a visit from Dia himself, who studied at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, before spending eight years as a video journalist across Africa with the Associated Press (AP) and Agence France-Presse (AFP). Dia enrolled in NYU Tisch for an MFA in filmmaking in 2014 and, along the way, found he was disappointed in the United States’ negative portrayal of Islam and West Africa.

He embarked on a mission to reclaim this narrative, rooting his work in daily, personal realities, casting actors for “Nafi’s Father” whom he knew personally. Granting his characters individuality and warmth, Dia highlights Islam as a means of control rather than a choice or universal belief.

In a small town in Northeast Senegal, Nafi, an 18-year-old girl and aspiring scientist who dreams of going to university in Dakar, agrees to marry the son of her father’s older brother, Ousmane. Her father, Tierno, the acting imam, or religious leader, learns of the wedding and is determined to stop it, arguing that she is too young. It is a legitimate concern, but he is unavoidably driven by lingering jealousy of his brother, who his parents favored, a desire to prevent Nafi from leaving the small town and most of all, alarm over his brother’s growing affiliation with a fundamentalist form of Islam, one that is much harsher and more militant. The moral battle deepens, creating tension between Tierno’s tender yet rigid nature and his brother’s hunger for power, rooted in a decades-long sibling rivalry that strains Nafi’s relationship with her father.

As several other reviews noted, the script could have been tightened at points, leaving more room for character development, which led to some leaps in logic that I found. Nafi and Tierno were rich with psychological depth — Nafi was presented as strong-willed yet gentle and compassionate; her father, likewise, is determined to protect the village while battling an illness — but the other characters sometimes felt like props without a clear role.

However, the story was nonetheless engaging, furthered by the striking shots and beautiful colors and shadows, as well as the unexpected, subtle comedic comments sprinkled throughout. The stunning cinematography creates a strong sense of place, offering up a lens through which Westerners can begin to understand West Africa as a real, experienced community rather than an isolated, exotic one. Dia highlights that although religion is a fundamental, unavoidable aspect of his culture, it is not the only thing that defines him and his community, as he has previously alluded to.

It would also be unfair to omit the fact that the debut film was shot in only three weeks on a small budget, as he shared during the post-screening Q&A, which helps explain occasional plot gaps that still allow for an overall impressive debut.

COURTESY PHOTO/NAFI’S FATHER

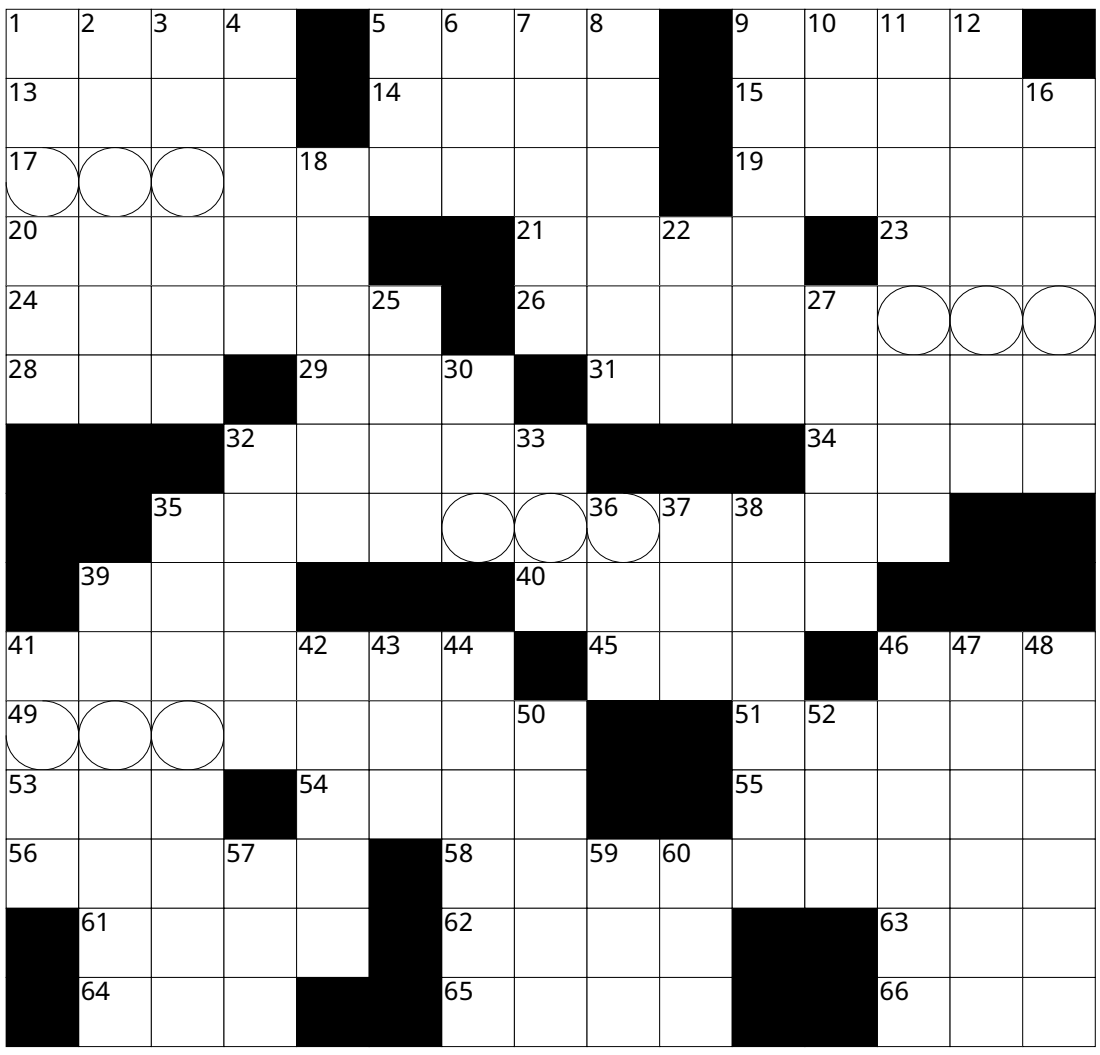
A still from “Nafi’s Father,” directed by Mamadou Dia.

Luckily, there is more from Dia, who became a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 2025: his second feature, “Demba” (2024), premiered at the Berlin Film Festival and examines grief and mental health struggles growing up in Senegal, another deeply personal story: when he was 13, his mother passed away and it was not until the past few years that he realized and understood that he had been depressed throughout most of his adolescence. Currently, he is developing a third feature, “Augustus,” inspired by the life of 19th-century African-American photography daguerreotypist Augustus Washington, who opened the first documented studio in Saint Louis of Senegal in 1860.

Dia has brought a fresh and authentic perspective of West Africa to the United States, one that is seriously needed. I was grateful to learn about this viewing opportunity through my French course, expanding my view of the highly white and Eurocentric understanding of French culture I have often been taught. I am incredibly grateful for the Department’s efforts to dismantle stereotypical and homogenous views of France and the Francophone world, and I hope this work continues.

Mums the Word

Zora DeSilva and Avery Goldstein



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40 Tuesday fare
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DOWN
1 Perplex
2 What God is, per an Ariana Grande hit
3 Vice President Harris
4 Colon-cleansing treatment
5 Minor criticism
6 ___ glance
7 Glacial ridge
8 "The Joy Luck Club" author
9 Insect with a 17-year life cycle
10 Granite State sch.
11 Seven Sisters college near Philadelphia
12 Class of 2026 and 2026.5
16 Bear or hare, e.g.
18 Agile
22 Part of TNT
25 "___ one, think that ..."
27 Unicorn loving daughter in "Despicable Me"
30 Something to chew on
32 Rub the wrong way
33 Semi-colon?
35 Paige Bueckers to Azzi Fudd
36 Cartographer's creation
37 Green prefix
38 Miyazaki's "My Neighbor ___"
39 Showy flowers
41 X-rated stuff
42 Tatum of "Paper Moon"
43 The Falcons, on scoreboards
44 Word before tee or car
46 "Yum!"
47 Aviator Earhart
48 Sings in the Alps
50 Rugby star, Ilona
52 Snowboarder Chloe
57 Maze runner
59 Singer DiFranco
60 Apple product

MIDDLEBURY WOMEN'S LACROSSE WINS 13TH NESCAC TITLE

By THIE HARTHONO
Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / STEVE MCLAUGHLIN

Goalie Elizabeth Savage '27 reached 204 career saves after Sunday's championship game.

On Sunday, May 3, the Middlebury women's lacrosse team claimed their 13th NESCAC title, beating Wesleyan 7-5 at Peter Kohn Field. The top-seeded Panthers also hosted the conference semifinals, defeating Trinity 13-8 on Saturday to advance to Sunday's final.

Middlebury opened the weekend with a composed victory over Trinity. The sides looked evenly matched through the first half: the Panthers came out hot, opening a 4-1 lead in the first period before allowing four goals in the second period, ending knotted at 5-5. Haley Hamilton '26 and Maddie Ackerman '27 tallied two apiece in the first period, and Caroline Adams '26 got on the board just before the halftime whistle.

The Panthers scored under a minute into the third courtesy of a courageous dash to the cage by Hamilton. The hosts conceded twice more to the Bantams, who led the game for less than a minute. Then the Panthers went on a run, scoring four unanswered goals for a 10-7 advantage heading into the fourth.

Thirty seconds gone in the final period, Trinity cut the lead to two. While quick and open play characterized the first half, the Panthers' ball movement began to wear down their opponents. A Trinity defender committed a foul, and Adams converted from the free position, slotting the ball right over the head of the Bantams' goalie at the last second. The Panthers closed the game with three unanswered goals.

The close first half saw the Bantams match the Panthers speed and athleticism, and the two teams' similar playing styles are no coincidence; prior to returning to coach at Middlebury, head coach Kate Livesay '03 led Trinity to a national title in 2012.

"The team showed great composure in the Trinity game," Livesay said. "Our ability to stay focused and positive was critical. We were able to get some draw controls and get some more consistent offensive reps, which started to pave the way for us to shift momentum."

Sunday's championship tilt was a gritty, defensive match, as reflected in the final score. Early saves by goalie Elizabeth Savage '27 ensured a scoreless first quarter for the visitors.

Adams converted on a free position for the only goal of the first quarter; Maggie Spehr '29, Siobhan Colin '28 and Sophia Lee '28 tallied goals in the second — all three assisted by Adams — to put the Panthers ahead 4-1 heading into the break.

Lee's goal gave Middlebury its largest lead of the game early in the third. Wesleyan drew closer, closing the gap to two goals with under four minutes to play. The Panthers responded a minute later, as Adams controlled the draw and Spehr scored to make it 7-4. Savage's stellar performance in goal included a couple of fourth-quarter saves — one on a free position, another with under a minute to play. Wesleyan would close the gap to two goals in garbage time. Adams led the way to victory with three goals and two assists, along with a match-leading eight draw controls.

"[Adams] continues to give us so much confidence in so many areas of the game," Livesay said. "She was able to win the ball to herself, which is very hard to do when teams are starting to understand your tendencies. And then her poise on the attack, even when she was receiving a lot of defensive attention, was so important."

The NESCAC trophy is Middlebury's third in four years, and tops off the fifth consecutive undefeated regular season for the Panthers.

While the Panthers' dominance in recent seasons makes the team a perennial favorite, few could have predicted how quickly Middlebury has gotten back to the top — the team lost 14 seniors after winning the national title last season, including top scorer Hope Shue '25.

Yet the team's well-established winning culture offered an excellent clue. "The team this year really leaned into traditions of the program and made efforts to 'leave it better,'" Livesay said.

"I think something that is really special about this program is that once you come through this program, you never leave it," Savage added. "We are driven by the concept of 'standing on the shoulders of those who came before us.' The stories we hear from alums and the ways they still love and support this team really show us how special the Middlebury Women's Lacrosse program is."

The Panthers have established themselves as an elite defense through their zone coverage, ranked third in the NCAA this season. "Our defense is a complete unit — everyone involved is very good at their skill set and they work well together," Livesay said. "Anytime you play a zone you need to have deep trust and faith in those who you play around and this team does that very well."

The team has also looked across its roster for contributions, with seniors and first years alike stepping into key roles. While the early season saw experimentation with the lineup, the end of the regular season and the NESCAC tournament show a team that has found its rhythm. A team that can grind out close wins, like the one against Wesleyan. The Panthers are once again a solid contender to win it all, and don't miss the opportunity to cheer them on this weekend as they hunt for a sixth consecutive national title.

TAPPED-OUT: SIGNING OFF

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

Being diagnosed with a femoral stress fracture in September of your first semester is not the ideal way to begin a college running career. Even once your new bone cells have filled in the cracks, certain mental fault lines may persist. You'll question what could've been so wrong for such an injury to occur in the first place, and you'll notice and hyperfixate on the smallest pain. The emotional urge to resume training will outpace your physical readiness to return. You'll feel out of balance with yourself.

Yet the team is your identity on campus. Almost every day of the week, you spend the hours between 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. together. You take classes with your teammates, you do homework with your teammates and you party with your teammates. You'll never eat alone because there's always a table, at any time in any dining hall, at which someone on the team is sitting. Absent the nagging mental and physical inconsistencies, life is sweet.

You'll feel guilty soon enough — guilty that you haven't actually raced, that you're a free rider enjoying the status of a varsity athlete without doing the work. And by the time you're physically ready to run, you're overzealous. Your mind may remember what 50 miles per week feels like, but the body is quick to forget. It doesn't take long for a second stress fracture to form, and before your second year even begins, the cycle restarts.

I love my former teammates and still live with the '26 cross country friends and family. I smile thinking of the six other class years I've overlapped with, each with their own batch of characters and distinctive spirit. I feel connected to the current guys with whom I've never ran (even when they're playing Fortnite in my common room), and still find myself saying "us," "we" and "our" when talking about the team in the dining halls. But to constantly test the dissonance between your mind and body, to want to run distances and speeds your legs can't handle, just to maintain an identity, is no way to spend college.

Being stuck between identities is no way to spend college, either. Part of the difficulty in quitting a varsity sports team is the apparent chasm that waits on the other side of not having an online roster photo. How will you fill your time? Who will you get dinner with? What do you do on the weekends when everyone is gone? It's a privilege to show up with an instant 50-person friend group, but it isn't conducive to learning how to make new friends. I entered the second half of my time at Middlebury facing these questions, and I ultimately found my answer through The Campus.

I started in my comfort zone, covering the 2024 TAM Trek for my first article. Standing at the Wright Park finish line, conducting interviews through Voice Memos and tracking my thoughts on my Notes app, I felt an empowerment in simply walking up to others and letting them talk. I had interviewed my high school friends on camera as a joke before, but this was different. This felt like adults taking each other seriously. By saying I was from the newspaper, the tone of conversation changed, and it compelled me to listen closely — to understand the story I was being told.

My interview for Senior Sports Editor took place as I sat in my dorm in Potsdam, Germany. Having endured the vetting process of Murray Dry's Constitutional Law course together, Ting Cui '25.5, the previous Senior Sports Editor, decided that I was sufficiently locked in for the job. I returned to campus motivated to confirm that belief, and Ting was instrumental in guiding me through the role, from showing me the ropes of the master spreadsheet to reminding me of the correct direction of grade-year apostrophes.

Ting's help, along with the support of the rest of our team — Theo Maniatis '28.5, Kanan Clifford '28.5, Thie Harthono '28 and Brooke Friberg '26 — has enabled me to find joy in filling this role. From shooting photos of the club sailing team's FJs on a skiff to trekking through the snowy Rikert woods amid the deafening roar of chainsaws, becoming the Senior Sports Editor has redefined my identity and purpose at Middlebury.

It has been my goal to redefine what the sports section can be. It isn't pleasant to feel redundant, and when Middlebury Athletics can cover a story in real-time, with more photos and statistics than anyone could ever need, it is important to ask what The Campus sports section can provide. I have tried to move beyond mere game coverage, to do and cover what Middlebury Athletics normally can't. I started the Tapped-in column as a result — a way to feature the quirky things Middlebury's athletes do. I have tried to highlight club sports, to speak to athletes outside of the varsity mold, to bring out the stories and individual voices that make Middlebury's athletic scene unique.

Thank you to the rest of The Campus staff and to all the students, athletes and coaches who gave me the time to interview them. I looked forward to transcribing every interview, to reliving the conversation and mentally arranging each quote collage. It's been a privilege to hear and retell your stories, and I can only hope that each article made clear my satisfaction in doing so.

STAFF PHOTO / TING CUI

Roadrunning: Simon Schmieder '26 photographs a 1968 Plymouth Roadrunner at the 2025 Middlebury Car Show.

MIDDLEBURY WOMEN'S GOLF TAKES 2ND AT NESCAC CHAMPIONSHIPS

By KANAN CLIFFORD
Sports Editor

Middlebury women's golf finished in second place in the NESCAC championships, relinquishing their tournament-long lead to Amherst on a frigid Williamstown Sunday.

As the sun's rays dimmed on Sunday at the beautiful Taconic Golf Club in Williamstown, MA, Season Wei '29 sank her birdie putt on 18 to pull ninth-ranked Middlebury's women's golf team into a tie for first place. But Amherst sophomore Mekhala Costello had other plans, jamming a two-foot birdie putt home on the short par-5 18th to give the fifth-ranked Mammoths a NESCAC win and leaving the Panthers to ponder their runner-up finish on the drive back to Middlebury.

After graduating legendary senior Audrey Tir '25, a casual fan might have written this group off heading into the 2025-26 season. Yet this team had no plans to quit. Coming off their historic 2025 NESCAC championship title and an exceptional sixth-place finish at the NCAA championship (where they led after the first round), the Panthers leapt into the season as proven winners.

Even with the advantage of incumbency, only two golfers who played in the NESCAC championship last year participated in this year's edition. Three new players — Wei, Julia Hua '29 and Teegan Duffy '28 — complemented veterans Morgan Lee '26 and Ella Han '27.

"We have a really strong group of freshmen — they're charismatic, awesome people, and great golfers," Lee said. The team's strength has led to razor-thin margins in pre-tournament qualifying.

"We had three girls tied to play in the fifth spot during our 54-hole qualifying. They played a one-hole sudden death playoff – and [Hua] chipped in to secure the final spot."

As with last season, the fall's results (four consecutive fifth-place finishes) were not necessarily championship caliber. The spring has been a different story, with the Panthers steadily progressing up until NESCAC weekend. The cohesive group came into NESCACs on fire, winning the Northeast Invitational (Apr. 18-19) thanks to simultaneous +4 overall performances from Wei, Han, and Lee.

They brought serious momentum into a rainy weekend at Williams College, shooting a collective 305 on Friday to lead Amherst by three strokes. Wei kicked off her excellent tournament with a +2 finish, with five birdies and a scalding 34 (-1) on the back nine. The wind and rain proved difficult to handle for most schools, yet Middlebury's golfers were used to dealing with extreme weather: "It doesn't bother us much," Lee noted.

Saturday's round was even better, as the Panthers shot a tournament-best collective 291 (+7), the team's best single-day score at the NESCAC championship since the tournament was founded in 2015. A respite from wintry conditions led to better scoring across every team, so their record day gave the squad a mere four-stroke lead over Amherst heading into Sunday, as Captain Lee's score of 70 (-1) on Saturday marked her career-best tournament round.

Lee and Wei paced the Panthers, as Wei birdied the par-5 18th hole to come into the clubhouse at an even par 71. Saturday was a day of team-wide contributions — as Han's clean scorecard (three bogeys, one birdie) provided another impressive score (+2) to the team, while Hua's scorching-hot 35 (E) on the front nine led to a +6 77 and a slight edge over the Mammoths.

Sunday tested the Panthers' resolve, as their lead gradually shrank until the team was tied with Amherst at +49 with three holes remaining. The Panthers were once again confronted with extreme conditions. "It was raining and sleeting all day on Sunday. It actually started to snow on my second hole," Lee explained. "It definitely takes a toll on your mind."

Wei double-bogeyed 17, a 200-yard par-3 playing two to three clubs into the wind. She proceeded to two-putt birdie the 18th, but Amherst's Costello matched Wei and eked out a win for the Mammoths.

Lee expressed confidence in this squad after the heartbreaking finish. "Our underclassmen are hungry to play on weekends, and they play like it, as does everyone on this team." The Panthers will practice throughout the week in anticipation of a potential at-large bid at the NCAA selection show next Monday, May 11.

Because of the NESCAC's strength this year, three teams could easily get selected (Amherst's auto-bid, plus Williams and Middlebury) to go to Palm Desert for the NCAA championship. For now, all that's left for Middlebury women's golf is to keep grinding and playing the great team golf they've demonstrated this spring.

COURTESY PHOTO / STOCKTON PHOTO

With birdies on holes six and 16, Morgan Lee '26 recorded the strongest individual performance for the Panthers on Sunday.